

2.62.200 Tuition Assistance.

The city recognizes the importance of employee educational growth to maintain and advance professional, technical, and managerial competence and to prepare employees for promotional or career change opportunities within the city.

A. Policy.

1. Through the tuition assistance program, the city may provide assistance to employees who:
 - a. Undertake a course of study which leads to an associate's, bachelor's or master's degree in an occupation for which the city normally recruits employees; or
 - b. Class work in an area which relates to the employee's field of work.

B. Standards.

1. All classes/courses must be offered by institutions accredited by the Accrediting Agency Evaluation Branch of the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council of Higher Education Accreditation.
2. Participants in the tuition assistance program will do so on their own time and are not to receive pay for time spent in attendance at course work authorized under this program.
3. Irregular work schedules may be authorized by the supervisor upon review of the employee's written request.
4. Tuition assistance will only be provided for courses receiving prior approval from the employee's immediate supervisor, department head, human resource department and mayor.
5. To qualify for tuition assistance, employees must meet the following employment conditions:
 - a. The employee must have completed probationary status.
 - b. The employee must be on the payroll at the beginning and at the end of the course.
 - c. The employee must be working for the city a minimum of 30 hours per week.

- d. A letter grade of "C" or better must be achieved. In courses that are ungraded, satisfactory completion is necessary to qualify for tuition assistance.
 - e. The course must qualify under this chapter.
 - f. The employee must not have been required to repay funds under this program within six months of a new request for tuition assistance.
- 6. The City authorizes tuition assistance or an approved course on the following basis:
 - a. 100 percent for a grade of C or higher.
 - b. 50 percent for ungraded courses satisfactorily completed.
 - c. Each employee who is qualified for this program will be eligible to receive up to a maximum of \$2,500 tuition assistance per calendar year.
- 7. Travel costs to and from the course, the cost of books and lab fees are not eligible under this policy.
- 8. Tuition assistance will not be granted to an employee receiving financial aid for the same course under a veteran's benefit program, scholarship, grant, or other educational subsidy.
- 9. If an employee voluntarily terminates employment with the city within one year after completing a course, the employee must repay the tuition assistance for that course. Such repayment can be withheld from an employee paycheck if deemed necessary.

C. Procedure for Participation in the Program.

- 1. Before taking a course, the employee must submit a written request for tuition assistance to the employee's immediate supervisor at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the course. The request shall describe the educational institution, the course name, the cost of the course and the start/completion dates.
- 2. The supervisor shall evaluate the request and forward it to the department head with a recommendation. The department head shall evaluate the request and forward it to the human resource department with a recommendation.
- 3. The human resource director shall review the request. If it meets all the eligibility criteria, the director shall forward it to the mayor for final approval.
- 4. Upon final approval the finance department shall issue a check for the amount

of the course up to the \$2,500 annual limit, made payable to both the employee and the school/institution.

5. Upon completion of the courses, the employee shall submit proof of the earned grade to the human resource director within ten working days after the course completion date. For the purpose of this section, course completion shall mean the date on which the educational institution issues course grades. If the employee fails to submit proof of the earned grade within ten days after course completion, the employee shall repay the City the entire amount of tuition assistance.

D. Funding.

1. Funds for the tuition assistance program shall be contained in the budget of the finance department.

2. The mayor shall propose to the municipal council the amount needed to fund the program as a part of the budget package.

3. The municipal council shall fund the tuition assistance program.

E. The cost, including employee travel time and expenses, for any mandatory education courses and similar training which may be required of an employee by a department shall be paid in full by that department from its annual budget. The expense of mandatory education is not eligible under this policy.